

Press Release
Unified Command
Buzzard's Bay Oil Spill

Contact: Joint Information Center

Phone: (508) 968-6440

(508) 968-6665

(508) 968-6650, (508) 968-6652

Bouchard Spokesperson: Suzanne Tavani (215) 901-8132

May 4, 2003

Release #15-03

5 p.m.

**Clean up crews target hotspots
Coast Guard Imagery of Ram Island is available on request.**

CAPE COD, Mass., - The number of personnel directly involved in oil clean up operations has increased to 663 people. Two hundred and seventy five workers were focused on the beaches of Sconticut Neck and West Island in Fairhaven. The Coast Guard and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts directed this increase. More than 800 personnel from federal, state and local agencies and the responsible party are involved in the coordinated response to this oil spill. There are also more than 275 volunteers involved in wildlife rehabilitation and other related activities.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services experts joined a 40 person clean up crew on Ram Island near Mattapoisett to employ deterrent strategies. The team will use strobe lights and **non-lethal** noise cannons and air horns in an attempt to keep endangered roseate terns that nest on the island from landing and getting oiled. Ram, Bird and Penikese Islands have been identified as highly sensitive nesting areas and are being protected by three layers of snare boom.

A wildlife rehabilitation facility is operating at the New Bedford Wastewater Treatment Plant where 79 birds are being rehabilitated with common loons being the predominant species. So far, 128 birds have been reported dead. The public should not handle oiled or dead wildlife. To report impacted areas or wildlife, contact the Coalition for Buzzard's Bay at **508-999-6363**.

An estimated 40 miles of shoreline have been impacted by oil. Tar patties and tar balls are shifting and have caused re-oiling at Mattapoisett Harbor and Sconticut Neck. Teams worked to clear those areas today. Current weather conditions are winds out of the northeast at 5-10 knots with seas from 2 to 4 feet. So far, 3,500 gallons of oil and 1075 cubic yards of solid oil waste have been collected, equal in volume to 23 tractor-trailers. Response crews have deployed 6500 feet of containment boom.

Additional areas impacted by the oil spill to date are: Mishaum Point to Horseneck Beach; Peases Point to Converse Point ; Demarest Lloyd Memorial State Park; Shore Beach (Little Compton, RI); Sippican Neck; Great Neck; Naushon Island; Wild Harbor; Nye's Neck; Scraggy Neck (Falmouth)

People should not attempt to remove or clean any oiled beach areas on their own. To report oiled areas please contact the Command Post at 508-968-6659.

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The Coast Guard and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are ensuring that protective booming equipment is available to townships in case of a separate emergency oil spill. Plans are also made for a mobile boat cleaning station to visit local harbors.

A marine casualty investigation into the cause of the oil spill is ongoing. Any fines or penalties will be assessed when the findings of the investigation are complete. Results of drug and alcohol tests on the crew of the tug *EVENING TIDE* were negative.

For more information on the use of bird deterrents on Ram Island please contact Buzzard's Bay Tern Restoration Project Leader and wildlife biologist Carolyn Mostello of Massachusetts Division of Wildlife is available for phone interviews at 781-706-2713 before 8:30 p.m. today.

Anyone with financial losses resulting from this spill should contact the responsible party claims hotline at **800-995-4045**.

Questions regarding fisheries closings should be directed to the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries at **508-563-1779**, Mondays through Fridays 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Shoreline Clean Up and Assessment Teams are placing colored flags on impacted beaches and sensitive areas. Orange flags denote shoreline areas in need of cleanup. Yellow flags denote environmentally sensitive habitat areas. If people encounter these flags, they should not remove them.

Offloading of the remaining gallons of fuel from Bouchard barge B. No. 120 continues at the ESCO terminal.

For information regarding clean up, media should contact the Joint Information Center at **(508) 968-6440, (508) 968-6650, (508) 968-6652, or (508) 968-6665**.

News, photos and other information on the spill are available to the public at www.incidentnews.gov.

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